

## LANDS OF THE NATION.

Interesting Synopsis of the Work of  
the Department in Charge of  
Secretary Noble.

The Importance to the Country of  
a Proper Utilization of the  
Arid Lands.

Recommendations on the Subject of Mineral Lands in Railroad Grants—  
The Pension Bureau.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—Secretary Noble, in his annual report, says the total number of agricultural patents issued for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1889, was 70,141. During the first eleven months of that year there were issued of said total 53,618 patents, being a monthly average of 4,874, while during the month of June of said year, there were issued 16,523 patents. Notwithstanding the reduction of clerical force during the months of July and August, of the present year, by leaves of absence to which the clerks are entitled, sickness, and other causes usually occurring, and unavoidable in these months of the year, agricultural patents were issued as follows: July, 7,423; August, 9,480. Adding to these the issue of June last, as above given, 16,523, we have the total for the three months of 33,426, or an average of 11,142 per month.

During the year the following patents, in

addition to agricultural, were issued:

Mineral patents, 913; coal patents, 155, covering 17,636 acres; railroad lands, covering 1,000,000 acres; land covered by railroad right-of-way, 239,771 acres; state selections under educational grants, covering 132,350 acres; Indiscriminate and miscellaneous patents, 129,380 acres making a grand total of 12,784,715 acres.

The final entries made during the year covered 288,365 acres; the original entries, 3,900,000 acres; the total of the original selections, 4,514,670.10 acres. The total amount of cash sales amounted to \$3,373,410.40. The number of final entries disposed of during the year reached 80,000.

There remained pending in the office on the 30th of June, 1889, 180,618 final entries of 1,000,000 acres; 1,000,000 acres of choice less than pending 353,264. Railroad right-of-way, 239,771 acres.

On the subject of irrigation the secretary said: "The act approved March 2, 1890, entitled 'An act for the reclamation of the arid lands of the United States,' for the purpose of expending the government money for the reclamation of the arid lands of the United States, makes an appropriation of \$250,000 for investigating the feasibility of irrigating the arid region of the United States. In conformity with the provisions of the above acts, the director of the geologic survey has notified the secretary of the interior of the United States of the various states and territories: California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana and New Mexico. These states have been approved by the department."

"There is certainly no object that should be more earnestly considered than the reclamation of the arid lands of the United States, which has already invested so much money and in which it has demanded so much attention."

territories where irrigation must be resorted to and where the same stream runs through different states or different territories, unless some control is kept by the national government, the stream may be exhausted or greatly depleted by those nearest to the source of those below, who have a ready-made but not a permanent water supply dependent on the particular water supply, may be brought to great loss, if not destitution,"

**MINERAL LANDS IN RAILROAD GRANTS.**

On the question of mineral lands in railroad grants, the secretary says: "There have been suspended in the office lists of railroad selections involving some

3,561.39 acres, upon the question whether the mineral rights were to be furnished to any mineral affidavits or not. The question presents itself in regard to the mineral lands lying within the grant of the railroads running through mineral belts, and which are not situated within the boundaries of the general character be included within the railroads grants. The act of congress absolute and unqualifiedly reserves all mineral lands from the railroad grants made to the mortgage states of the North Pacific and the North Central Pacific and Southern Pacific of this country, and this reservation affects the claim of such a road as the Northern Pacific to a great part of its land subsidy. It also affects the claim of the Southern Pacific of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific of this country with some others; and how to determine what are mineral lands at this time when the roads are claiming their grants is, in fact, a difficult matter. Originally it was left to the mortgagee to make affidavit in the form adopted by my predecessors and by them deemed sufficient for a long while, but by which it was not possible to determine whether or not the oath to swear to his actual knowledge that the land was not mineral.

Many of the selections made by the railroads under their grants were supported by affidavits made by the mortgagees before the commissioner of the general land office he demanded that a further affidavit

should be made the same as required from the mineral claimants, whereby actual knowledge of the fact that there is no mineral land was required to be sworn to. This the railroad companies have failed to do, insisting that their claims, made up of a railway, and a right of way, are valid and should be allowed. Whether this is not yet determined, but it is deemed a matter to which your attention should be invited for the purpose of having it thoroughly explained and explained on the subject. On the other hand it is noted that the additional affidavit has been required since the selections were claimed on the other, stands the absolute responsibility of the railroad companies to prove that they enjoy these mineral lands, if such selections there among the selections made by the railroads. If legislation is not made on this subject the department will have to decide by such light as may be obtained from the real nature of the lands, whether mineral or not, however difficult the inquiry may be and whatever the responsibility assumed. It is deemed, however, that the act which has been passed by Congress enabling the land department to thoroughly investigate the character of lands supposed to be mineral and within the reservation of the law before the railroad is entitled to additional information, and will require a considerable appropriation for the purpose of investigation and survey, and connected with this, authority should be given to the department to refuse to certify lands to the railroads un-